

2013 NOV 12 AM 9:09

From: Bob Kern [mailto:mickibob@hawaiiantel.net]
Sent: Tuesday, November 12, 2013 9:05 AM
Subject: Council Meeting Testimony Bill 53 (2013) CD2
Aloha City Council Members:

Please accept my testimony in support of Bill 53 (2013) CD2 to improve public access to records and information.

My name is Bob Kern. I have been a volunteer at Hanauma Bay for about fifteen years and a past Vice President of the Friends of Hanauma Bay. I look forward to again joining the Friends board of directors and continue with them in the more than decade long fight to have transparency in the Hanauma Bay budget.

While my specific interest is Hanauma Bay, as a citizen of Honolulu, I know well, as I know you do, that the lack of transparency is City wide, touching many city programs and projects and hinders the fair and efficient operation of Honolulu.

In my years of experience working as an individual and a member of the Friends of Hanauma Bay to improve conditions at the nature preserve, one constant has been the refusal of City officials to provide information regarding budgets, planning and decision making about Hanauma Bay. As a result of this willful refusal to share information and seek advice from experts, the facilities at Hanauma Bay have progressively deteriorated, becoming unsightly in many places and creating potential safety hazards to visitors.

For example, since its inception, the video presentation has been rightly criticized as being full of confusing and inaccurate information. We have long been promised an upgrade which would include better information regarding ocean safety. Recently we learned that funding for an upgrade had been included in the Hanauma Bay budget at least five times. Each time the request was denied. Why? No one knows. By whom? We don't know. These questions have not been answered.

It has long been suspected that money in the Hanauma Bay budget is not being properly used. Although the 2007 auditor's report stated that the money is being properly *accounted* for, no one knows how it is actually being used. Over the years, repeated requests for specific budgetary information have been ignored. As has City Council resolution 13-143 "URGING THE CITY ADMINISTRATION TO PROVIDE THE FRIENDS OF HANAUMA BAY ("FOHB") WITH THE NECESSARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE HANAUMA BAY NATURE PRESERVE FUND TO ENABLE THE FOHB TO CONDUCT AND COMPLETE LONG RANGE PLANNING."

Questions and concerns regarding transparency of the Hanauma Bay fund have been asked for at least a decade in the media.

Advertiser June 24, 2003
"If there's a surplus, why are we facing these denials?"

Advertiser Oct. 3, 2004
"Specifically, the Friends of Hanauma Bay want to see how much the city received in fees from concessions, parking and admissions and how much it spent in 2003."

"The city says there was a \$1.4 million surplus in the Hanauma Bay special fund. At the same time, requests for positions and equipment were turned down at the nature preserve."

East O'ahu Sun June 24, 2010

"The main culprit is a cumbersome financial procedure administered by a government department that manages the Bay without sufficient knowledge of its needs and operations."

"The biggest question is: Given the sufficient available assets in the Hanauma Bay Fund, why isn't the park being maintained and much needed repairs done?"

"It is clear there is a problem with upkeep at the Bay, and there are sufficient funds to fix these problems, yet nothing is being done."

Star Advertiser July 24, 2010

"There's a lot of things that can be done that aren't getting done even though the Hanauma Bay fund totals several million dollars. The money is just sitting there."

"...money had been diverted from the touch screen replacement and requests for a backup projector and railing repairs had been denied."

Star Advertiser July 19, 2010

"Funds budgeted to replace the computers were diverted."

Civil Beat July 11, 2011

"A \$50,000 permanent replacement for the broken roof of the information booth on the beach remains on hold."

"We're concerned with the transparency for the Bay fund."

Lack of transparency has been a long standing and frustrating concern for citizens and groups working to improve our city. I urge the City Council to rectify this situation and demand transparency from those who maintain important records and information.

Please pass Bill 53 (2013) CD2.

Respectfully Submitted,

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